



AmeriCorps and Disaster Services in Tennessee

When it comes to disasters, America can count on national service.

From preparedness to response to recovery, AmeriCorps members play a key role in disaster services across the country. Representing one of the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#)'s six strategic focus areas, the agency's [Disaster Services Unit](#) implements a vision of ensuring that all programs can effectively collaborate to strengthen communities during “blue skies” and support them during times of crisis.

Whether due to established ties in the local community or specialized training – or both – national service participants can act as unique “force multipliers” in addressing disaster-related community needs. Here in Tennessee, our state is home to a range of AmeriCorps programming that builds community and organizational capacity to more effectively prepare for and respond to disasters. As [Volunteer Tennessee](#) highlights these programs and their members this September, you can join the conversation on social media by using #DisasterServe.



Photo courtesy of the Corporation for National and Community Service

- The Community Cares AmeriCorps program hosted by [Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation](#) (Morristown, TN) provides members with the opportunity to build relationships with low-income seniors with the goal of enabling independent living. One of several services that members provide to their most vulnerable clients is the creation of disaster-readiness plans tailored to clients' specific needs. By reaching frail seniors in tandem with the delivery of other services, the AmeriCorps members share important information and resources with the community before an incident occurs.
- During the 2015-2016 program year, [Hands On Nashville](#) (HON) devoted one of its member positions entirely to disaster services, reflecting HON's active role in the city's recovery from the 2010 flood that heavily impacted the city. A life-long Nashville resident, Marshall Brewer experienced the flood first-hand in one of the city's hardest hit areas. In describing his motivation for serving as HON's first Disaster Services AmeriCorps Member, he writes, “[this role] seemed very exciting, especially with the opportunity to see the nonprofit sector through the governmental partnership side, and also the opportunity to work the Mayor’s office and grow my governmental knowledge and skill sets.” As an AmeriCorps member, he contributed to the development of HON's disaster responsiveness plan in addition to working closely with



Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) of Middle Tennessee and various local government agencies such as the Office of Emergency Management.

- In Knoxville, [CAC AmeriCorps](#) members who began their service in August 2016 completed their disaster response training in just time to deploy to Louisiana with the American Red Cross, responding to the worst natural disaster in the US since Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Six members spent two weeks serving 12+ hour shifts in a variety of roles, including shelter operations and bulk distribution. “The diversity of work, and the surreal circumstance under which they occur, paint a picture of organized chaos with Red Cross and partner government, non-profit and private organizations working together to provide structure in an environment where stability has been removed,” writes CAC AmeriCorps Program Director, Jason Scott. You can read more the members' experiences in this recent [blog post](#).



*Photo courtesy of Knoxville-Knox County
Community Action Committee*

As [National Preparedness Month](#) comes to a close on September 30, it is a time for all organizations, programs, staff, and members to reflect on their own state of preparedness and evaluate how to strengthening it. We applaud all the hard work going on in the Volunteer State, including the efforts of AmeriCorps programs, to ensure that all Tennesseans can effectively respond to events affecting our communities.

[Volunteer Tennessee](#) is a 25 member bipartisan board appointed by the Governor to encourage volunteerism and community service. Volunteer Tennessee pursues its mission through administration of AmeriCorps grants, training and collaborations and coalitions with public and private organizations interested in volunteerism and service. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

AmeriCorps is a program of the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) (CNCS), a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President’s national call to service initiative, United We Serve.

As part of their continued efforts to engage the public with national service, CNCS has released their [2016 Public Engagement, Outreach, and Education Plan](#). As part of this plan, the agency has designated monthly themes throughout the year, centered on CNCS focus areas. September’s theme focused on [Disaster Services](#).